

UNIT 1 DEVELOPMENT OF LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Language teaching starts with oral/spoken language and the child learns it by listening. All of us learnt our language initially by listening to our parents, members of our family and the people around us. And then in order to speak the language, we started using the sounds and words that we have listened to. Thus, listening and speaking are the beginning of all language learning. In any teaching activity concerning language learning this must be kept in mind at all times. A teacher should give the students plenty of opportunities to listen to and to speak the language that they are learning. Many research studies have shown that as much as 95 per cent of language usage is oral i.e., speaking and listening. It is, therefore evident that any language teaching programme should concern itself with the development of oral language among the learners, the ability to speak effectively and to listen accurately and discriminately.

The major competencies under the skills of listening and speaking have been listed in detail in the statement of MLLs in Unit-4. In this unit, we have selected a few of the objectives listed under these skills and then tried to explain how these can be achieved by using certain methods and techniques.

It goes without saying that to achieve any group of objectives, the basic and easier ones should be attained first. In the MLL approach, care has been taken to ensure this. The competencies for each class has been arranged accordingly i.e., from simple to the more complex ones. Therefore, in suggesting suitable activities under listening and speaking we have emphasised here that initially we should aim at developing among our students the skill of listening. This definitely facilitates in understanding the simple instructions given in the classroom or on the playground, and to simple rhymes and stories. Thereafter, we can ask them to repeat simple sentences correctly and recite simple rhymes, poems, etc. in group.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you should be able to help learners to:

- listen to a poem and answer questions on it;
- listen to a story and answer questions on it;
- listen to a conversation and answer questions on it;
- speak out pairs of words after listening or reading so as to bring out the difference in pronunciation;
- speak aloud sets of words and pick out the words that sounds different; and
- give clear directions about how to reach your home from the school on the basis of a map.

1.3 LISTENING ACTIVITIES

Students learn many things by listening. They learn how to respond to a question by saying “yes” or “no”, or by giving a statement, how to respond to a command or request. Some listening activities that can be conducted in the classroom are listening to a poem, listening to a story or listening to a dialogue. Remember in presenting a poem, or a story, or a dialogue, styles may differ but the presentation should be so effective that the students listen with full interest.

1.3.1 Listening to a Poem

At the primary stage, students love to listen to popular poems. They can easily learn and remember the poems. As a teacher, your task is to select an interesting poem and present it in a natural way with proper articulation, intonation, rhythm and appropriate actions and gestures.

First recite the poem yourself and then let the learners recite it initially along with you and later on independently in groups. You may, thereafter ask the students some very simple questions about the poem. This will ensure better attention of the students and contribute to the development of the listening skills.

An example is given below for your ready reference.

COLOURS

(Poet: Rodney Bennett; Book: **Pixie Dell** edited by W. Bertram.)

Red is for Roses
 And Blue is for Sky,
 White is for Snow,
 Or a Cloud sailing by,
 Silver's for Rain
 With the sun shining through,
 Yellow's for Butter
 And Buttercups too.
 Black is for Blackbirds
 And Gold for their Bills
 Green is for Leaves
 And for Meadows and Hills,

Grey is for Night

With no colours, and then

Morning's for all of them

Shining again.

Questions

1. How many colours are mentioned in the poem? Recite the poem again. If necessary repeat each stanza.
2. What colour is
 - a) the cloud?
 - b) a meadow ?
3. Name the colours found in the morning.

A similar activity can be conducted by you by selecting a poem from your own region.

1.3.2 Listening to a Story

Students prefer to listen to and learn stories at the primary stage. While telling a story to a particular class, remember that the story must be easy enough for the students to understand. You can present a story by means of a tape recorder or by reciting it yourself in the classroom.

For example, the following story may be narrated before the students and the questions given below it may be asked. Depending upon the students' interest, the story may be narrated as many times as possible.

A TEST

(From Buddhist Folklore by Visalakshi Johri)

The king of Varanasi had a jewel of great beauty which had a hole in it. In the middle of this hole, a thread had got stuck and no one could remove it. Goldsmiths and artisans tried various ways by which to take it out but none succeeded. The king called a wise man and set him the task of removing the thread. He wanted to test his wisdom.

The wise man asked for a bit of honey. He put a few drops of honey in the hole. The thread soaked up the honey. He placed the jewel near some ants. Very soon these tiny creatures entered the hole in the jewel, ate up the honey along with the bit of thread that was soaked in it. They came out at the other end, looking for some more honey.

The wise man was now able to rethread the jewel. After rethreading he gave it to the king. The king was very happy with him and made him his chief advisor.

Questions

1. What had happened to the jewel?
2. What did the wise man put in the hole of the jewel?
3. What did the ants do?
4. What reward did the king give to the wise man?

You may also select some story from your own region for carrying out this activity.

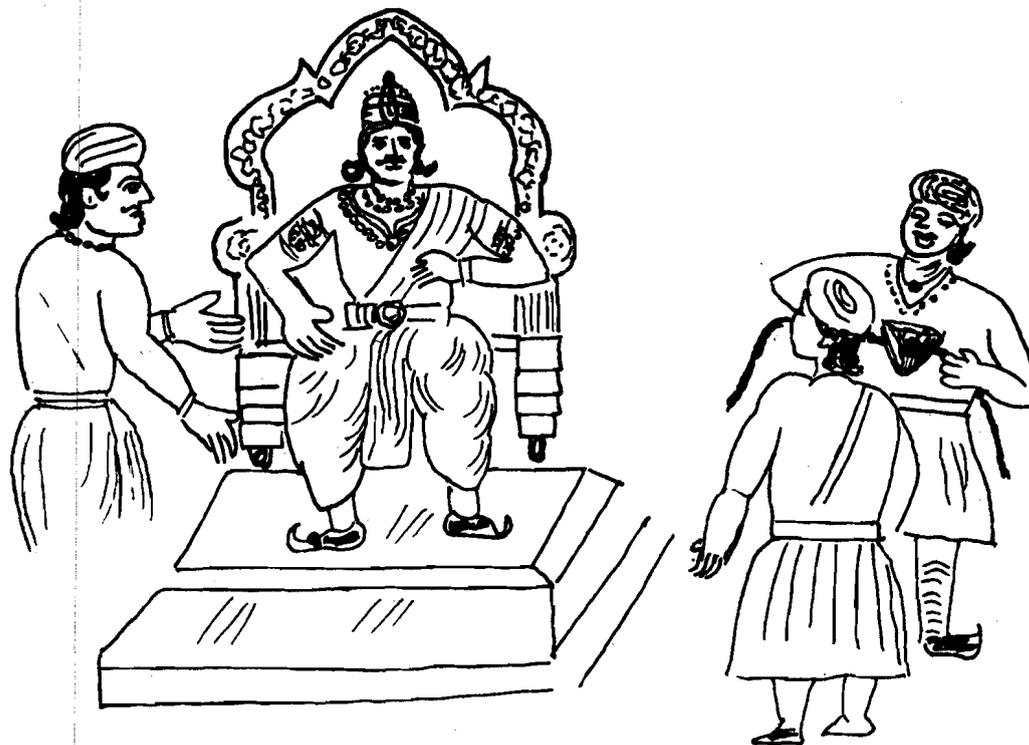


Fig. 1.1: The wise man is trying to remove the thread

1.3.3 Listening to a Dialogue

Listening to a dialogue or interacting properly with a friend or family members is one of the important competencies that students must develop at the primary stage.

To develop this competency you may select any two children from the class and ask them to read aloud the dialogue given below. After the children have carried out the dialogue you may ask the students to answer the questions that follow the dialogue.

DIALOGUE

- Amar : Akbar, I'm going to the market. Come with me.
 Akbar : Oh! Amar, I can't come with you today. I'm going to a movie,
 Amar : What a pity! Which movie are you going to see?
 Akbar : It's called "Amar, Akbar, Anthony".

Questions

1. What are the names of the two speakers?
2. Where was Amar going?
3. What is the name of the movie mentioned in the dialogue?

A similar dialogue may be selected or prepared on your own to conduct this activity.

Check Your Progress

Notes : a) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

b) Fill in the blanks with appropriate words given in the brackets.

- a) All of us learn our language initially by to our parents.
 members of our family.

(speaking, listening)

- b) Listening and speaking are the of language learning.
(beginning, end)
- c) Competencies under the MLL approach has been arranged from
..... to ones.
(complex, simple)
- d) Initially our main aim is to make our students understand.....
they listen to.
(what, how)

1.4 SPEAKING ACTIVITIES

An ability to speak effectively and fluently is of great importance in life. But true skill and ease in speaking can come only from genuine practice in all the various types of situations or opportunities for speaking in which a learner naturally finds himself/herself. In teaching speech the teacher therefore, should create in the classroom such situations or opportunities for speaking as the learners, would encounter in their real life. Dialogues, play-acting or role playing, describing present or past events, retelling new items etc. after listening to the radio or watching the television, are some such activities which can provide opportunities for training in carrying out conversation in real life. To start with, students can be asked to talk about their toys and the games they play. Practice in speaking become meaningful only when the students have something interesting to talk about and when they understand what they say. Later on, they may be encouraged to ask each other questions related to their personal lives. Questions involving some humour and good-natured testing will make this activity more interesting and enjoyable. In the next stage, a guessing game can be organised where one student describes an object or a person and others try to identify the same. There may be a few language errors here and there, but at the initial stage the teacher may ignore them and encourage the students to speak without fear and hesitation. However, pronunciation problems that interfere with communication should be corrected as soon as possible.

1.4.1 Pairs of Words and Odd Word Out

Exercises like (i) pairs of words and (ii) odd word out can be used to teach and drill the pronunciation (as well as spelling) of words which are commonly mispronounced and also misspelt. You can use these exercises to focus on differences in vowel or consonant sounds. Examples of these types of exercises are given below.

Read the following pairs of words aloud so as to bring out the difference in sound of the underlined letters. **Only one sound is different in each pair.**

Speak these words several times.

1. ship, sip
2. bet, bat
3. jew, zoo
4. sit, seat
5. chip, cheap
6. pull, pool

Odd word out

Read the following sets of words aloud and pick out the word in each set which sounds differently from others.

1. wear, beer, stare, fear
2. peer, beer, dear, pair
3. heart, shirt, hurt, earth
4. so, do, no, go

You can also select words from your language on similar pattern.

1.4.2 Giving Directions

Giving and seeking direction is one such speaking activity which one has to carry out quite often in real life situations. You can provide practice to your students by organising activities like the following.

Study the map given in the preceding page (see Fig.1.2) and give directions about how to reach your school from your house.

The following may help you

1. turn left
2. pass the Public Library

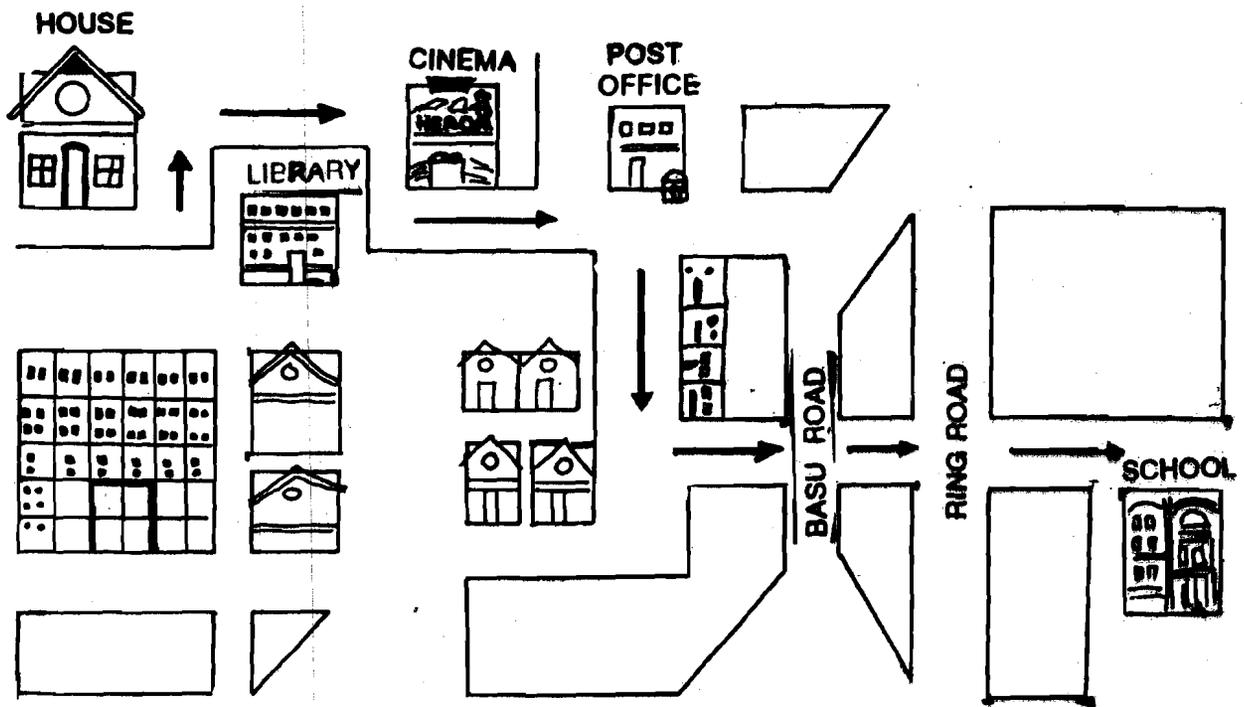


Fig. 1.2: Way to the school

3. at the cinema
4. at the post office
5. second house on the right
6. on Nehru Street
7. along Ring Road
8. into Basu Road

You may bring in changes in the direction according to the location of the school and your house.

1.5 SPEAKING AND READING ALOUD

Both the activities (speaking and reading aloud) follow almost the same procedure. But the only difference is that, while speaking we do not seek help from any print material and while reading aloud, the reader reads written or printed matter. Hence, reading is nothing but making sense out of print.

There are certain features common to both speaking and reading aloud. These features are:

- i) stress on words
- ii) intonation
- iii) voice changes or modulation

In reading, you get help from the written or printed matter in various forms. For example, punctuation marks at the end of sentences tell whether they are statements, questions or exclamations.

Read the following sentences aloud.

1. a) What a lovely picture! (exclamation)
b) What ? A lovely picture? (doubt about the beauty of the picture)
2. a) You are getting a promotion. (statement)
b) You are getting a promotion? (surprise)

Now listen to them as they are said on the audio cassette, when you visit the resource centre and compare your speech with that of the speaker on the tape.

In printed or written language, apart from punctuation, certain other clues are provided. For example italics or bold type face is used to indicate stress.

3. a) **He** will invite Sheila to the party. (stress on **He** shows that only he will invite Sheila)
b) He **will** invite Sheila to the party. (stress on **will** shows that he will definitely invite Sheila).

As you did earlier, read them out first. Then listen to them on the tape. Do you hear a difference? Each of the above sentences conveys a slight difference in meaning.

Sometimes a word in a sentence indicates how it should be said or read aloud. For example

4. (a) "Get out of the room." she **shouted**. (b) "Get out of the room" , she **whispered**.

Again, read these words aloud and then listen to them on the tape. The word "shouted" and "whispered" have definite meanings which tell you how the sentence should be said or read aloud. Now choose one such four pairs of sentences from your language, read them aloud and record them on the audio cassette. And then let the students listen to them and try to understand what is being said.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Write your answer in the space given below.

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

2. Answer the following questions.

- a) What is the difference between speaking and reading aloud?
-

b) What are the features common to both speaking and reading aloud?

c) Write an exclamatory sentence.

d) What is the difference between the two sentences given below?

i) You are a teacher.
 ii) Are you a teacher?

1.6 MODEL FOR SPOKEN LANGUAGE

Speaking is a voluntary activity. In other words, you speak when you feel to speak. You learn to speak correctly by listening to correct spoken language. The more you listen to good spoken language, the better your speech will be. You are the model for the spoken language for your students. It is very important to make your students speak. From the very beginning, give them every chance of saying something. Even if they make mistake, don't correct them immediately. This may make them too frightened or too shy to speak again. Once they are willing to speak and feel confident about speaking, you can begin to correct them later. The standard form of language can be taught to them. In order to speak a standard form of language they need to:

- 1) pronounce the sounds of the language correctly.
- 2) make necessary distinctions between similar sounds in their own language and those in the language they are learning; and
- 3) prevent sounds and intonation patterns of their own language interfering with the sounds and intonation patterns of the language they are learning.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Write your answer in the space is given below.
 b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

3. What precautions should be taken so that the students speak the standard form of language?

i)

ii)

iii)

4. Give one word which could be pronounced in the same manner with the words given below.

i) Pool

ii) Bat

iii) Could

5 A few set of words are given below in which one word is pronounced differently. Underline that word.

- i) But, Put, Cut, Nut
- ii) Floor, Poor, More, door
- iii) Came, Game, Name, Care

1.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed:

- the importance of listening and speaking as these are the basis of language teaching and learning,
- certain common features of speaking and reading aloud, and
- how to give directions to others about the location of your house,
- how to practice the listening and speaking activities,
- the role played by the teacher as the model for the students' spoken language.

1.8 UNIT-END EXERCISES

1. Why can't we separate the skills of listening and speaking?
2. Give one example each of a sentence conveying
 - i) statement
 - ii) exclamation
 - iii) question
3. How would you indicate the different kind of sentences in writing?
4. How would you motivate/encourage your learners to speak in the classroom? Give three or four examples.
5. Frame exercises on 'pairs of words' and 'odd word out' from your language.
6. Draw a map indicating the direction of your school from your house.

ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. a) Listening, (b) beginning, (c) simple, complex, (d) what
2. a) The difference between speaking and reading aloud is that in reading aloud we use a written or printed page but while speaking we do not use these.
b) Features common to both speaking and reading aloud are:
 - i) stress on words :
 - ii) intonation; and
 - iii) voice-change or modulation,
- c) What a beautiful flower!

- d) The difference between the two sentences is that while one is simply making a statement, the other one is in question form that requires a statement as an answer.
3. Students should need to know the following things in order to speak a standard form of language:
- i) pronounce the sounds of the language correctly;
 - ii) make the necessary distinction between similar sounds in their own language and those in the language they are learning; and
 - iii) prevent sounds and intonation patterns of their own language interfering with the sounds and intonation patterns of the language they are learning.
4. i) tool, cool, school
- ii) cat, rat, sat
- iii) would, should
5. i) put
- ii) poor
- iii) care